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Security Council

Seventy-second year

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Thursday, 6 April 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2017/271)

Letter dated 5 April 2017 from the SecretaryGeneral addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/285)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2017/271)

Letter dated 5 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/285)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting. It is my pleasure to welcome Mr. Lacroix to the Council for the first time in his new capacity.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/271, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, and document S/2017/285, which contains a letter dated 5 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: I thank you, Madam President, for welcoming me to the Council for the first time.

(*spoke in French*)

It is with great pleasure that I address the Security Council for the first time since my appointment at the head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In this regard, I wish to pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, for his devotion and untiring efforts to the benefit of peace. Council members may rest assured that I will take up the challenges that have been entrusted to me with determination and conviction, and it is with great candour and transparency that I intend to work with the Security Council.

About two weeks ago, I had the opportunity, together with Mr. Hervé Ladsous, to visit Mali and speak with its authorities, including President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita; the members of the Government, including Minister Abdoulaye Diop; the international mediation team, led by Algeria; and the staff of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the United Nations country team, who are doing remarkable work under difficult conditions.

As underscored in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/271), which was submitted to the Council last month, positive progress has been made in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. Despite the despicable attack on the camp of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Gao on 18 January, the operationalization of joint patrols in Gao have been taking place since 20 February. After Gao, Kidal and Ménaka, the Agreement Monitoring Committee announced the day before yesterday the establishment of interim authorities in Taoudenni and Timbuktu by 13 April. These developments point to the gradual return of State authority in northern Mali as a result of interim arrangements, and MINUSMA, through its good offices, is doing everything in its power to help parties achieve tangible results on the ground.

We must, however, ensure that the new authorities and joint units are provided with adequate resources to fulfil their political and security responsibilities and that basic services are quickly made available to the people. In addition, it is key that we clarify the duration of these interim arrangements in view of their late start, as well as the status of dissident groups vis-à-vis the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) and the Platform within the framework of the monitoring mechanism. The Malian authorities have indicated to us that these issues are being discussed.

In this sense, the National Accord Conference, which ended on Sunday, 2 April, was a unique opportunity to bring together the various segments of the Malian population, as well as the signatory parties. Despite the delayed participation of some key actors, such as the Coordination of the Azawad Movements and the political opposition, Malians from various regions of the country were able to speak to each other for the first time since the crisis began in 2012. We hope that

the progress made during these five days will serve as a basis for the drafting of a charter for peace, unity and national reconciliation and will enrich the process of constitutional review in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation.

However, with the 2018 elections looming on the horizon and despite of the advances over the past few months, we cannot ignore the significant delays sustained and the fragility of the gains that have been made. Overall, the implementation of the Agreement is still slow. The national strategy on security sector reform is also not yet finalized. The criteria for integrating the combatants from the signatory groups have not yet been determined and the eight cantonment sites built by MINUSMA remain empty. Longer-term institutional and security reforms are needed, in particular with regard to the future of the reconstituted national army. This lack of clarity in the institutional framework hampers efforts on the ground and is not conducive to building a climate of trust between the parties. This situation is leading to a splintering of the security and political landscape and further complicates our work for peace. Therefore, it is more important than ever for MINUSMA to vigorously pursue its political role and support the peace process.

The security situation remains worrying. Attacks by terrorist groups continue and are becoming increasingly sophisticated. In that regard, I want to pay tribute to MINUSMA and in particular to the troops who have lost their lives while serving this operation. I also want to pay tribute to the memory of the French soldier in Operation Barkhane, who lost his life yesterday. As the Council knows, a new partnership, bringing together the most active terrorist groups in Mali, was created under the banner of Al-Qaida and under the leadership of Iyad ag Ghali, the leader of Ansar Eddine. Da'esh, meanwhile, is slowly making its presence known in the Sahelo-Saharan strip. This convergence of threats is particularly alarming in a context in which the presence of the State is weak and sometimes even non-existent, and in which the implementation of the peace agreement still has to be translated into tangible results on the ground.

In addition, the centre of the country remains the scene of intense tensions fueled by extremist groups that, defying the authority of the State, carry out targeted assassinations and force the closure of schools in some localities, depriving children of educaiton. In response to this situation, the Malian authorities have drawn up an integrated security plan for the central regions, which I welcome. This multidimensional approach is necessary and welcome, and MINUSMA will continue to support it.

In the background, cross-border criminal networks remain very active. The revenue generated by this illicit trafficking are a financial boon for terrorist groups operating in northern Mali. The delays in the peace process and the often insufficient presence of State authority provide an opportunity for the enemies of peace to satisfy their economic interests. This situation is untenable and must cease. Given the cross-border nature of these networks, a regional approach is needed.

We welcome the efforts of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to set up a regional force, with a first step of strengthening cross-border cooperation. We are exploring how we can effectively support this initiative so that it contributes positively to the work of MINUSMA and the French Force Barkhane. However, let us not lose sight of the need to include peace-stabilization efforts in the framework of the peace agreement. Complementarities and opportunities exist between peacekeeping efforts and the regional initiative of the G-5 Sahel, and we will try to articulate them with our partners. In the immediate future, MINUSMA will strengthen support for the Malian armed forces and the implementation of the reforms envisaged in the field of defence and security.

In that context, MINUSMA will continue to play a major political and security role, particularly as one of the main providers of stability in the north and part of the centre of the country. To that end, MINUSMA is taking the necessary steps to adjust its priorities and posture according to the stakes and progress made on the ground, in accordance with its mandate, while taking into account the security of its staff and the objective of providing the best possible support.

We are also pursuing our mobilization efforts with contributing countries, exploring innovative partnerships and concepts in order to fill our operational gaps. If we are still unable to deploy the 2,049 military personnel and 480 police personnel authorized by resolution 2295 (2016), there are very real prospects for progress and we are determined to do our all to ensure that they materialize as quickly as possible. The deployment of the rapid reaction force of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire to Mali, originally planned for February, should take place between May

and October. As for the logistics combat battalion, Sri Lanka will deploy a company in July and Egypt will deploy three companies between the months of July and December. We are also continuing our efforts to deploy other capabilities, including transport and attack helicopters, among others.

(*spoke in English*)

In conclusion, there are at this stage three important points. First is the need to continue to strongly encourage the parties to redouble their efforts to accelerate the implementation of the peace agreement and to clarify the next steps once the interim period expires in June. Secondly, we need to address the scourge of international and transnational organized crime and its impact on the peace efforts. On this particular aspect, the Security Council has already expressed its intention to consider targeted sanctions against spoilers. We believe that it is time to consider establishing such a sanctions regime. Finally, in the light of the prevailing political and security situation, MINUSMA continues to adjust its priorities and posture, within the existing mandate, in order to provide the best support. We will revert in due course if any adjustments to the MINUSMA mandate are required, in particular in our next end-of-mandate report.

The President: I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing. I also thank him for his leadership and time. We look forward to working with him.

Before calling on speakers, I should like on behalf of us all, extend our condolences to France for the soldier who was lost in Mali yesterday. We know the sacrifices our military make when they do this work, and our hearts and prayers are with the people of France today.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, whose presence is important for all of us and for our joint efforts in Mali.

I would also like to thank the new Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his very enlightening briefing and to take this opportunity to extend our warmest wishes for success in his new duties.

Almost two years after the signing of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and despite the real progress made, Mali is in a difficult situation and remains subject to the threat of terrorist groups. The alliance of terrorist groups that was announced a month ago under Al-Qaida in the Sahel, under the command of Iyad ag Ghali, reveals a macabre competition between Da;esh and Al-Qaida in Africa. In that context, it is more than ever urgent that the Malian parties fully implement the peace agreement at two levels.

First, at the political level, it is urgent that the Malian parties fully implement the agreement. After long months of stagnation, real progress has been made recently by the Government and the signatory armed group to fulfil their commitment under the peace agreement. This includes the installation of some interim authorities in the north of the country, the launch of mixed patrols in Gao, and the convening of the conférence d'entente nationale, bringing together all the actors concerned. But these achievements remain fragile and insufficient nearly two years after the signing of the agreement. On the ground, the populations of northern Mali have to see any noticeable improvement in their living conditions. The interim administrations are not yet operational, the fight against impunity remains insufficient, and the redeployment of the Malian State in the north has made little progress, as has the reintegration of veterans. We ask the signatory parties to set their mistrust aside and demonstrate their sincerity in implementing the peace agreement.

In their successive reports on Mali, Secretaries-General Ban Ki-moon and Guterres have recommended to the Security Council to impose sanctions against those who hinder the implementation of the peace agreement. We believe this approach to be essential in order to remove the numerous obstacles of the peace process and to encourage all the Malian actors on the ground to choose the side of peace. The creation of a Security Council sanctions regime should also target those, be they signatories to the agreement or not, who engage in trafficking and block any peace that may be contrary to their interests.

In a complementary way, the international community must reinforce its mobilization in support of the implementation of the peace agreement. France reiterates in particular its full support for the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali, Mr. Annadif. We also welcome the

role played by Algeria as leader of the international mediation and support his unwavering commitment.

At the security level, it is urgent that the Malian parties also fully implement the peace agreement. The time squandered by the Malian signatories to the agreement is time won by the terrorist groups. The spread of terrorist attacks in central Mali is proof of that. Contrarily, the redeployment of the presence of the Malian State in the north, as provided for in the peace agreement, would restore the people's hope for peace. The concrete implementation of the peace agreement must demonstrate to all, and especially to unemployed youth in the north, that the voice of terrorism and narcotraffickers is a dead end.

In the meanwhile, the repeated attacks against the Malian security forces in the north places the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and Operation Barkhane on the front line against terrorist groups. On behalf of France, I would like to salute the courage of the Blue Helmets in Mali, who are carrying out their work in very difficult conditions. MINUSMA, which is the only United Nations peacekeeping operation facing a terrorism environment, needs to be strengthened. MINUSMA must urgently have the staff and equipment approved by the Security Council last June in resolution 2295 (2016). We hope that new troop-contributing countries will commit to Mali during the upcoming special meeting on MINUSMA force generation, which is to take place in New York on 8 May.

With its robust mandate and unprecedented technological mans, MINUSMA is a groundbreaking operation for the United Nations. Without the presence of MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane to support Mali, terrorist groups would be able to reconstitute a safe haven that could host terrorists from throughout the world. On its part, the French Operation Barkhane continues to provide support to MINUSMA in instances when peacekeepers are severely threatened. Launched in 2014 at the request of the States of the Sahel, Operation Barkhane is now deployed over territory larger than the territory of Europe from Lisbon to Moscow. It includes 4,000 military personnel, drones, aircraft, helicopters and hundreds of vehicles. One hundred and fifty terrorists have been put out of operation, with several tons of munitions and weapons seized or destroyed by Operation Barkhane in 2016.

France welcomes the initiative of the Five States for the Sahel to set up a joint force in order to counter the expansion of the terrorist threat at the regional level — for the first time with a focus on securing border areas. We also welcome the support that the Secretary-General intends to accord to that project, in coordination with the States of the region and the African Union. This counter-terrorism force is to become part of the overall peace process in Mali. Only the full implementation by the Malian parties of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali will ensure lasting peace. In addition, the force should complement the efforts of MINUSMA. Since the Group of Five for the Sahel was established (G-5 Sahel), armed forces from Mali, the Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso have regularly carried out joint cross-border military operations, for which Operation Barkhane has provided operational support.

As you have recalled, Madam President, for which I am personally grateful, a French soldier died yesterday in Mali in the course of just such an operation close to the border with Burkina Faso. He is the nineteenth French soldier to die in the Sahel since January 2013. Our determination remains intact — and I would say even stronger than ever — in helping the countries of the Sahel to build up their capacity to counter the terrorist threat. We hope that the Security Council will support the G-5 Sahel in their undertakings.

The Malian parties have a historic responsibility so that the people of Mali can at last enjoy lasting peace. For its part, the Security Council must step up its effort to resolve the crisis, which threatens international peace and security. Peace in Mali is a crucial challenge for us all.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). I warmly welcome the presence here today of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of the Republic of Mali.

First and foremost, through the French delegation, I should like to express my condolences to the people and the Government of France in connection with the death of one of its soldiers in Operation Barkhane, who gave his life fighting for freedom and stability in Mali.

The Security Council's consideration of the report (S/2017/271) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali in line with resolution 2295 (2016) is yet another chance for us to assess the progress made in the implementation of the Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which we in Senegal consider to be the sole road map for moving forward. The briefing given us by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, whom I heartily congratulate on assuming his new post, clearly illustrated that there is still some way to go. We welcome the appointment of Mr. Lacroix and assure him of the Senegalese delegation's full support for the success of his undertaking.

It is clear that the commitment of the Government of Mali to sparing no effort in effectively implementing the peace agreement — a commitment that I am sure Minister Diop will shortly reiterate — gives us a reason to believe that, along with the resolute determination and the mutual trust among the signatories, this will serve as the sole measure for successful, lasting reconciliation. We believe that the recently held conference for national harmony is a positive step in that regard. Less than two months from the end of the interim period provided for under the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, and given the slow pace of implementing various elements of the agreement, the Senegalese delegation would like to highlight the following points.

First, there is a need to effectively enact the interim measures in all the areas concerned. In that regard, we welcome the appointment of interim authorities in Gao, Kidal and Ménaka. We hope that the same will soon be done in Taoudenni and Timbuktu.

Secondly, beginning joint patrols is another requirement in confronting the security challenges in the north and centre of the country. In that regard, the areas of Kidal and Timbuktu should follow the example of Gao, where such patrols are already taking place.

Thirdly, it is also important to speed up the institutional reform process, especially in the area of security. That will make it possible to facilitate the restructuring of the Malian armed forces, whose effective presence in the north will help ensure the restoration of State authority in that part of the country, where there is growing insecurity and all types of trafficking.The presence of MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane in the area is already reassuring. But they must be reinforced with a national army with the primary responsibility for providing security and safety for its citizens. Throughout that entire process, therefore, Senegal insists on the need for training and equipping personnel, especially given the new law on military planning adopted by the National Assembly.

Fourthly, with respect to the deployment of the quick-reaction force, and without prejudice to the force-generation meeting to be held here on 8 May, I can confirm that that will take place as soon as possible. Senegal is now taking the appropriate measures in that connection. I should also like to announce that, two weeks from now, an assessment mission will be conducted to determine how we can specifically ensure the deployment of helicopters.

MINUSMA's mandate will come to an end on 30 June. With a view to its renewal, the continuing hostile environment in which the Mission operates must be taken into account. Given its multidimensional character, it is clear that MINUSMA cannot be considered a classic peacekeeping operation. Boosting its operational capacities is clearly needed. In that regard, I should like to recall the provisions of resolution 2295 (2016). In paragraph 19 (d), the Council asks MINUSMA

> "to anticipate and deter threats and to take robust and active steps to counter asymmetric attacks against civilians or United Nations personnel, to ensure prompt and effective responses to threats of violence".

Senegal therefore continues to call for MINUSMA to be adequately equipped.

I will conclude with a reminder that my country has deployed a 425-unit reserve battalion to MINUSMA, along with a 140-unit engineering company, two 140-unit police companies totalling 280 persons and, as I just mentioned, the deployment of the quick-reaction force is well under way. And I would like to reiterate to the Foreign Minister that Mali has the full support of the Senegalese delegation in its quest for peace and reconciliation.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would first like to warmly welcome Under-Secretary-General Lacroix to his first meeting of the Security Council. We are very much looking forward to working with him.

(*spoke in French*)

We also welcome Foreign Minister Diop back to the Council.

(*spoke in English*)

I would also like to express our condolences to France on the loss of yet another French peacekeeper in Mali.

Despite positive developments, the situation in Mali continues to warrant our attention. We commend the progress that has been made on establishing interim authorities and launching mixed patrols, but with only three months of the interim period remaining, making progress on implementation is even more pressing, and numerous actions still have to be completed. We therefore encourage the Government to redouble its efforts to deliver on the December benchmarks and the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali so that Malians can reap the peace dividend. We also call on all actors to acknowledge that time will be needed beyond the expiration of the interim period to consolidate progress, not least where the interim authorities are concerned. Algeria's sustained commitment to the process will be crucial.

All Malians must feel a sense of ownership in the country's future. The Government should make every effort to ensure that inclusive consultations and channels for interaction between citizens and the State form part of the constitutional review process. That will include addressing the crucial issue of relations between the centre and the periphery, and the essential provisions of the peace agreement. We were encouraged by the broad participation of women in the Conférence d'entente nationale last week, and we emphasize the importance of ensuring women's full and active participation and leadership at all levels of the peace process. We encourage the Secretary-General to take further stock of progress in that area in his next report.

It is urgent that we address the dire security situation in Mali's central regions. That should to be taken into account in the next mandate for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The revised mandate should strengthen the enabling capacity of the United Nations and its ability to use its good offices to promote security. The Government's aspiration to re-establish State authority throughout the country, particularly in Mopti and Ségou, must go beyond mere physical presence and be built on a people-centred approach to governance. It is important to build confidence in the legitimacy of State functions, including by providing basic social services. We welcome the Government's development of a multidimensional strategy for the region and encourage its swift implementation. A trustworthy, community-oriented and human rights-focused police service, along with a clear vision for security-sector reform, will be essential.

Later today, the Council will hold a debate on peacekeeping. We will underline how important we believe it is that peacekeeping operations be seen as part of a broader peace strategy. In Mali, as elsewhere, the primacy of politics should be a guiding principle for United Nations engagement. That also means that we must invest in the right resources for making sure that we can provide adequate support to political solutions. For that reason, in the lead-up to mandate renewals, we encourage the Secretariat, working with the wider United Nations system, to provide conflict and political analysis that is context-sensitive. Such analysis should form the basis for action-oriented Council discussions, including on greater coherence between civilian and military components.

We welcome the steps that the Secretariat has already taken to enhance transparency, predictability and efficiency in MINUSMA's force-generation process, as was called for at the troop- and police-contributing countries' meeting in January (see S/PV.7874). In order to address the long-standing capability gaps in MINUSMA, we urge the troop- and police-contributing countries to make use of that initiative, particularly during the upcoming force-generation conference in May. Sweden would also like to emphasize our shared responsibility for increasing the number of women in all types of posts and at all levels within MINUSMA.

Lastly, the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel is a positive step in addressing the regional dimension of the challenges in Mali. A number of issues should be addressed before it becomes operational, particularly its relationship with MINUSMA and its rules of engagement. Ensuring cooperation and interoperability with other security actors and guaranteeing differentiation between humanitarian actors and the military, as well as between the military and the police, should be priorities. In that regard, we also underline the need for making progress in the areas of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security-sector reform, including by accelerating the

efforts to establish the criteria for reintegration, so as to ensure a truly reformed national army.

The commitment of the signatories to the peace agreement to moving forward in a way that benefits all Malians should be welcomed. However, we still need all parties to make an intensified effort if the agreement's full potential is to be realized. MINUSMA has proved to be a critical tool for those efforts. Sweden remains fully committed to supporting it, not least through our considerable contribution to MINUSMA and our extensive cooperation on development.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to join you, Madam President, and others before me in expressing my deep condolences to the family of the victim and to the Government of France for their loss.

We are pleased to welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Foreign Minister of Mali, to the Council. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his informative briefing and to welcome him to his new post. This is an important and challenging time for United Nations peacekeeping, and we look forward to working closely with him. I would like to assure him of our full support.

As the current mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)enters its final months, the Council must correctly assess the severity of the situation we face in Mali. The picture is not good. More than a year ago, the Council visited Mali and reiterated its call for concrete progress in implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Unfortunately, most of the key observations that we made during our mission are stil! valid now — the slow implementation of the agreement; the lack of inclusiveness, especially of women and young people; the concerns about the lack of decentralization and the state of the interim authorities in the North; and the minimal progress in security sector reform and the extension of State authority. Since then, the security situation has worsened and become more complex, with continuous attacks by violent extremist and terrorist groups and intercommunal clashes erupting in central Mali.

As we consider MINUSMA's future mandate, we should ask ourselves how the United Nations can better support the overriding goal of implementing the peace agreement. It has 20 chapters, with annexes, and its mutually reinforcing elements must be implemented in a balanced manner. We would like to emphasize the need for further progress in security-sector reform; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; cantonment; and the redeployment of the Malian defence and security forces. That is crucial to building confidence in the northern and central regions. Japan appreciates the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel to establish a new joint force, which represents African States' ownership of the effort to counter terrorism in the region. The Council should study its proposal closely to see how it would interact with MINUSMA.

MINUSMA's mandate is multidimensional, and its strategic priority is supporting the signatory parties in implementing the agreement, particularly the provisions related to the restoration and extension of State authority. Political and institutional reforms are desperately needed, and all five interim authorities in the north must be effective in providing the people with tangible benefits. The time is right for the Council to seriously discuss how MINUSMA can best be positioned to support both the political and institution-building needs arising from the peace process. Japan looks forward to contributing actively to this difficult but necessary discussion.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing on the situation in Mali. We also welcome the presence at our meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mr. Abdoulaye Diop.

We have been consistently of the opinion that a stable settlement of the situation in Mali is can be accomplished only through the rigorous implementation by all parties in Mali of the provisions contained in the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. In that regard, we note the positive trend in its implementation. We welcome the launch of the proccess to establish the interim authorities in the five northern regions of the country, as well as the launch of the mixed patrols. We think that this could end the current stagnation and call upon countries to build on that progress. We also note the great significance of the National Accord Conference, which was conducted on the initiative of the Government. We believe that this will also provide an impetus to the peace process in Mali.

We are concerned about the remaining security issues in Mali. The attacks by jihadists on civilian

facilities, the Malian military and United Nations peacekeepers continue. We are also concerned by the fact that terrorist activity — including, unfortunately, by Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb — is spreading to the central part of the country and growing increasingly sophisticated. We welcome the political resolve of the Malian parties that made it possible to implement the Algiers Agreement in spite of the barbarous attack on 18 January on the camp of the Operational Coordination Mechanism. Given the situation, we are convinced that it would be appropriate to fully support the parties to the Agreement rather than use the threat of sanctions. Security measures should be strengthened by taking effective steps to resolve serious socioeconomic issues in the north. In that regard we expect the development strategy for the northern regions to be passed. We know that Bamako is actively working on that right now.

Despite international and regional efforts, terrorism in the Sahelo-Saharan region remains the main threat to the security and stability of that part of the continent. The international terrorists there are increasing their activities. They are trying to broaden their geographical scope, and we are witnessing the emergence of new groups and leaders. There was a recent terrorist attack against the French forces, and we extend our condolences to the French in the wake of the death of a French soldier.

The security situation is also influenced negatively by the porous borders open to international criminal groups, drug trafficking, illicit weapons trafficking and other smuggling. We recall that terrorism and violent extremism in Mali and the Sahel came from outside. The radicals in the region appeared after the situation in Libya was destabilized. Without progress in the Libyan settlement, it will be impossible to definitively resolve the issue of terrorism in the Sahel. We are convinced that coordinated steps, both by the Africans and the international community, will continue to be important to fighting this development. We note in that regard the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel to create a regional force. However, it is becoming increasingly obvious that military measures will not be enough. The extremist ideology must be countered effectively.

We also need to eliminate its breeding ground by finding more effective solutions to the socioeconomic issues in the region and strengthening State institutions. In that regard, the consistent implementation of the United Nations comprehensive strategy for the Sahel is becoming increasingly topical. We need to make sure that this mechanism gives increasingly efficient yield. Given the opinion of Mali's partners, we supported resolution 2295 (2016), which extended and strengthened the mandate of the Mission. We believe that its full implementation will help ensure the safety of the peacekeepers, increase the effectiveness and role of the Mission in stabilizing the northern areas of Mali, and help the peace process as a whole.

We are concerned by the fact that the numbers of the military and police components of the Mission are very far from the levels planned. We call on the Secretariat to become more actively involved in ensuring that the Mission reaches the needed parameters and that there is the necessary rotation of contingents. We should not put on the back burner efforts to ensure that the peacekeepers have all the necessary basic services and means of protection. The safety of Mission personnel should remain our absolute priority.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by thanking the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his briefing. Since this is his first time taking the floor before the Security Council, I would like to convey to him my wishes for his success and to assure him of the support of my delegation. I would also like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Corporation and African integration of the Republic of Mali, Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, for his presence here today.

I thank the United States presidency for promoting transparency in the work of the Security Council by holding most of our meetings this month as open public briefings. Of course, Uruguay has underscored in previous closed consultations on the situation in Mali that little or nothing of what was discussed was actually conveyed to the Malian authorities. We have very willingly attended these quarterly meetings and believe that this is a good opportunity for the positions of the various Council members to be directly conveyed to the Government of Mali and other countries interested in the evolution of the conflict. We regret that the situation in the Republic of Mali continues to deteriorate, largely due to the actions of terrorist and extremist groups that are enemies of the peace and reconciliation process.

We note with satisfaction the statement of the Under-Secretary-General with respect to the interim measures that have enabled the establishment and formation of authorities and mixed patrols during the month of April. Uruguay wishes to reiterate and

underscore that the main responsibility for order and the protection of the population in the Republic of Mali lies with the Malian authorities. The international community, in particular the United Nations, has been assisting the Government in its efforts to fulfil the responsibilities vested in it as a sovereign nation. In fact, the international community has been supporting Mali in its efforts to achieve peace in the country in various ways. It has been making financial contributions for the implementation of projects in the north of the country; establishing and strengthening the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA); and implementing peacebuilding projects thanks to the Peacebuilding Fund. The Secretary-General and the Security Council mission also made visits a year ago.

I would like to highlight the conclusions of the recent high-level meeting held at Headquarters in September to provide new impetus to the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, co-chaired by Algeria, Mali and the United Nations. That notwithstanding, the achievement of peace in Mali will require the firm and determined commitment of the State, which must seek real and lasting political solutions across its political spectrum to then be able to tackle the terrorist threat.

I agree with what was said by the Under-Secretary-General that we must identify a set of priorities geared first towards implementing the peace agreement between the three signatory parties. Then, once the Government of Mali has achieved political and institutional stability, it will be able to tackle the security problem through effective strategies, with the support of the international community. We cannot lose sight of the fact that the entire Malian population must feel as if they are part of a single State. To that end, the State must make its presence felt across the entire territory, providing basic services to the entire population. We reiterate once again that any territory abandoned by the State becomes fertile ground for the operation of terrorist groups, which take advantage of the vulnerability of the people there.

Uruguay wishes to express its extreme concern over the violations of human rights committed by the defence and security forces of Mali, as described by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2017/271). The institutions entrusted with ensuring law and order should act in strict conformity with constitutional norms, protecting and providing guarantees to the civilian population.

Much has been said about the need to optimize resources for peacekeeping operations, and Uruguay certainly believes that that it is necessary. On this point, it is necessary to highlight the role of the host State in optimizing the results and effectiveness of the operations in the field.

In connection with the possibility of imposing sanctions, as raised in resolution 2295 (2016) and in the latest report of the Secretary-General, Uruguay would be interested in analysing what would be the real impact and scope of such measures, and, most important of all, the position of the Malian Government in that regard. We see the potential imposition of sanctions only as a means to achieve the ultimate goal of the effective implementation of the peace agreement.

In conclusion, Uruguay wishes to reiterate once again that the current mandate of MINUSMA exceeds that generally affodred to a peacekeeping operation, in that it includes possible activities to combat terrorism. Uruguay voted in favour of resolution 2295 (2016), as it considers that the security situation in Mali is extraordinary, but such actions should not be replicated in future peacekeeping mandates. In brief, we shall continue to work to establish stability in Mali and to ensure that MINUSMA is no longer considered the most dangerous peacekeeping operation in the world.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I want to start by congratulating Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix on assuming the office of Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

(*spoke in French*)

I thank him for his very clear detailed briefing.

(*spoke in English*)

I also want to join in your words of condolence, Madam, to the French delegation. The memories of Council members are still fresh from visiting the headquarters of Operation Barkhane in N'Djamena as part of their journey to the Lake Chad basin, where we were able to fully appreciate the role played by the Operation's soldiers in the region, and in Mali in particular.

Allow me to highlight three points: the security situation, the political process and the activities of

the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

First, my delegation is extremely concerned by the deteriorating security situation in Mali. The scale of terrorist attacks in central and northern parts of Mali has reached an unprecedented level, turning MINUSMA into one of the most dangerous peacekeeping missions in the world. This underlines the urgent need for the parties to uphold their commitments in the security sector. The launch of mixed patrols in Gao is a long-awaited and positive step forward. We should encourage the Government of Mali and the signatory armed groups to expedite the work of launching the mixed patrols in Kidal and Timbuktu, too. The redeployment of Malian the defence and security forces throughout the country is equally crucial for taking control of security. We also support the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel countries to establish a regional force, which will contribute to fighting the spread of terrorism and violent extremism in Mali and the region.

My second point concerns the political process. As the transitional period comes to an end, progress on the political track has remained limited. We believe that the parties should redouble their efforts to complete the installation of the interim administrations in the north and to engage in inclusive national consultations aimed at resolving existing differences in light of the upcoming constitutional review and its referendum. The ultimate goal of these efforts should be the comprehensive reform of national institutions, which will help to address the root causes of the conflict and bring real peace dividends to the Malian people.

This leads me to my third and last point. We believe that sustainable peace in Mali cannot be achieved without the support of MINUSMA. Ukraine commends the courage and dedication of the men and women of the Mission, who continue to operate under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions. Given the fact that MINUSMA remains the primary target of terrorist attacks, we are convinced that particular attention should be paid to the enhancement of the safety and security of its personnel.

Another issue of concern is the significant gap in MINUSMA capabilities. As the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/271) notes, despite the adoption of resolution 2295 (2016), none of the additional authorized military and police personnel and none of the additional military assets authored has been deployed. The Mission will not be able to effectively carry out its mandate unless the capability gaps are addressed.

As an active United Nations troop- and police-contributing country, in particular in Africa, Ukraine is exploring ways of doing its share to this end.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes Mr. Lacroix in his new role us Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and thanks him for his briefing.

We welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mr. Diop, and thank the international mediation team, including Algeria, for its good offices.

We extend our deepest condolences for the death of a French peacekeeper.

China supports efforts of the people and the Government of Mali to promote the peace process. We commend the resolve and action of the Government of Mali in applying the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The establishment of interim authorities in northern Mali has seen progress recently. The joint patrols by the signatory parties to the peace ageement have begun, and the National Accord Conference was successfully held and adopted its final report, all of which China welcomes.

At the same time, the Mali peace process faces difficulties. Terrorist activities continue to spread, posing challenges to the political and security situation in Mali. The international community should actively support the peace and reconciliation process in order to achieve security, stability and social development. I should like to make the following points.

First, we must support Mali in accelerating the implementation of the peace agreement. We welcome the promise of the signatory parties to the peace agreement that they will continue promoting the peace process. We hope that all parties will consolidate their achievements to date and actively advance inclusive political dialogue that encompasses all regions and ethnic groups, and accelerate their implementation of the provisions of the agreement so that peace and reconciliation can be realized as soon as possible. The international community should provide constructive support to peace and development in Mali. The Council's actions should be conducive to maintaining the existing results of the peace process and mutual trust among all parties. China commends the work of the international

mediation teams in promoting peace talks among all parties in Mali, and hopes that the team will continue to play a positive role in the political process.

Secondly, we must help Mali to strengthen its security and counter-terrorism capacities. The international community should continue to assist Mali's security forces so that they may strengthen their presence in the northern and central regions and gradually assume the responsibility to maintain national security. All parties should, upon request from the Malian Government, provide assistance in the areas of intelligence-collection, military training and ammunition and weapons management.

Terrorist activities in Mali are rampant and highly mobile across borders. This issue requires an integrated approach based on regional cooperation. China welcomes the decision of the Heads of State of the Group of Five for the Sahel countries to create joint counter-terrorism forces for regional security. We call on the international community to support that decision. We support Africa in resolving African issues in African ways and jointly addressing the threat of terrorism.

Thirdly, we support the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). China commends MINUSMA's unwavering efforts to achieve peace and reconciliation in Mali. We will continue to support MINUSMA. We hope that the Mission will pursue its coordination and cooperation with the host country and help Mali to strengthen capacity-building in the area of security and facilitate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

MINUSMA is deployed in a complex and dangerous environment; the security situation is very serious and there is a severe shortage of resources, including equipment. We hope that MINUSMA will continue to strengthen security for personnel and communication with troop-contributing countries and assistance providers. We must ensure that MINUSMA has the equipment and resources required to carry out its mandate and defend itself.

China firmly honours its commitment to the Mali peace process. At present, there are some 400 Chinese peacekeepers in MINUSMA. China is ready to work with the international community as a whole to continue to support the peace and reconciliation process in Mali and make our due contribution to lasting peace and stability and economic and social development in Mali.

Mr. Cardi (Italy) (*spoke in French*): I acknowledge Mr. Diop's presence at today's meeting. I would also like to welcome Mr. Lacroix and thank him for his briefing. I wish him every success in his new post.

We note that there has been ongoing progress in Mali's political arena. The holding of the National Accord Conference, new joint patrols in Gao and further steps in the setting up of interim authorities in Kidal, Gao and Ménaka are encouraging signs. However, the deteriorating security situation and the ongoing terrorist threat in the region reminds us that more must be done, and rapidly, to stabilize the country. The solution lies in the implementation of the Algiers agreement. Its implementation and the constitutional reform process under way should be a key component in the process towards inclusive stability that fosters dialogue among the parties in the country. That dialogue must continue beyond the interim period.

Stability in the Sahel depends, to a large extent, on stability in Mali. We share the Secretary-General's concerns about growing ties between terrorism, transnational organized crime and trafficking in drugs and in persons. Such scourges are major hurdles in the peace process in Mali and in the wider region. In partnership with the Secretariat and other members of the Security Council, we will continue our efforts to develop solutions and stem those threats. In that regard, we will also continue to provide bilateral assistance.

I should like to recall that the protection of cultural heritage is part of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The Council has demonstrated its commitment to that subject by adopting resolution 2347 (2017), which was put forward by France and Italy. The International Criminal Court handed down a historic ruling in the Al-Madhi case about the destruction of cultural heritage in Timbuktu.

With regard to regional efforts, we welcome the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel to establish a counter-terrorism brigade and we encourage those same countries and MINUSMA to coordinate their efforts in the region. In more general terms, we believe that it is useful to have a high level of coordination among all international partners working in the security sector in Mali, in particular with the European Union (EU) and its EU Training Mission and the EUCAP Sahel Mali mission. In addition, we recall the importance of relaunching the United Nations integrated strategy for

the Sahel, which, we believe, is a central platform for addressing challenges throughout the region.

MINUSMA continues to face major challenges and we cannot forget the price that it has already paid in human lives. However, MINUSMA's mandate has already shown its ability to include several innovative principles, in spite of logistical constraints and the shortage of equipment. I would like to commend the Mission, troop-contributing countries and the French Operation Barkhane for their efforts. In that regard, I should like to extend condolences to France and to the family of the French soldier from Operation Barkhane, who was killed last night during a mission in the south-east of the country. That serves as a sad reminder of the growing terrorist threat in the region.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the efforts of the Secretariat to ensure MINUSMA's effectiveness, as illustrated by the force generation conference to be held in May. I am also pleased to share information about Italy's contribution to the Mission's Trust Fund. The aim of the Fund is to support Malian security forces in their policing and border-control activities in the centre and east of the country.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to start by greeting and welcoming the Foreign Minister of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop. I would also like to extend condolences to France and to our colleagues following the loss of one of their compatriots, who was part of peacekeeping efforts in Mali — a country whose people have done so much for Africa.

I wish to thank Mr. Lacroix for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in Mali and on the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali over the past three months. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate him on his appointment as the new Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and wish him all the very best in the effective discharge of his responsibilities. It was clear to us from our very first encounter with him in Paris a few weeks ago that he has all it takes to hit the ground running at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, even at such an unprecedented and complex time.

We are encouraged by the recent progress in the implementation of the June 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We note the holding of the high-level meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, which has facilitated renewed efforts for the establishment of interim administrations in three areas for the launch of joint security patrols. We appreciate the efforts of the international mediation team in convening that meeting and the parties for demonstrating commitment to making progress in the implementation of important aspects of the peace agreement. We also welcome the National Accord Conference, held in Bamako from 27 March to 2 April, as part of the implementation of the peace agreement to address the root causes of the conflict and ensure greater inclusiveness in the peace process. We note the outcome of the Conference, which brought together the signatory parties and different sections of Malian society and concluded with the adoption of a National Charter For Unity, Peace And Reconciliation. Those recent developments have injected some momentum in the implementation of the agreement; they need to be further consolidated. The support of the international community, including countries of the region, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the United Nations needs to be sustained.

As other colleagues have stated, with only three months left before the end of the interim period, the implementation of the agreement, no doubt, still faces a number of hurdles and the country continues to confront enormous peace and security challenges. The need for the restoration of inclusive State authority in the central and northern regions of Mali remains critical but continued insecurity in those regions poses serious challenges that prevent the effective deployment of State officials and, in some instances, forces those who have already started their duties to leave the area. Terrorism and violent extremism, transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking continue to pose serious security threats in Mali. The targeting of signatory parties by terrorists and violent extremists to obstruct the implementation of the peace agreement and perpetrate insecurity in the north is a matter of serious concern.

The recent announcement of a merger by armed and terrorist groups in Mali underscores the seriousness of the threat. The efforts of Mali and the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel region to fight the resurgence of violent extremists and terrorist networks, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and other forms of transnational organized crimes need to be supported. In that regard, we note the decision of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel to deploy a 5,000-strong joint force.

We appreciate the civilian and military personnel of MINUSMA who are operating under extremely difficult circumstances. We understand the enormous challenge faced by the Mission and recall the meeting of the MINUSMA troop- and police-contributing countries held in January (see S/PV.7874) to discuss the ways and means of enhancing the capacity of the Mission to enable it to effectively carry out its mandated tasks. There is a need to follow up on the outcome of that meeting in order to provide the Mission with the necessary logistical support. We hope that next mandate renewal of the Mission will afford us an opportunity to address some of these issues.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, at the outset, to welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of the Republic of Mali. I would also like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing and congratulate him on taking over the leadership of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. I assure him that Egypt will support him and his Department out of our belief that peacekeepers are very important for the maintenance of international peace and security.

As one of the major troop-contribution countries in the Organization, I would like to extend my condolences to the Government of France for the recent loss of the French soldier in Mali.

The situation in Mali has direct repercussions on regional stability in the Sahel region. These repercussions spill over into North Africa and South Europe. Restoring stability and security in Mali is therefore a local priority with regional and international dimensions.

Mali has had to face difficulties and challenges since the beginning of the crisis, despite earnest and sincere efforts by the Malian parties and the widespread international and regional support for those efforts. However, the achievements on the ground today fall short of fulfilling the aspirations of the Malian people to achieve peace, security and sustainable development and end human suffering.

It is very important to push for the implementation of the provisions of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali as a comprehensive framework for parties that really yearn for peace. The accelerated implementation of the Agreement will unite all these parties against their common enemy, namely, terrorist groups.

We cannot underestimate the role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in providing assistance to Mali and protecting civilians. I would like now to pay tribute to the personnel of the Mission for the courage they have shown and the sacrifices they have made.

The Malian defence and security forces is the entity that bears the primary responsibility for maintaining peace, security and stability in Mali. It is vital that the Malian forces be restructured and their capacity built up.

The points I have just made are self-evident, and all delegations and stakeholders should agree with them. There is consensus on what the difficulties, challenges and even the solutions are. However, what remains pending is the implementation mechanism.

As the interim period draws to an end for the implementation of the provisions of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement next June, the Security Council shoulders the responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations to realistically deal with the situation in Mali based on learning from the shortcomings and building on the points of strength in the Council's previous resolutions and policies on Mali and taking practical steps in that regard. It is important to understand the available tools and optimize their use in striving to fulfil MINUSMA's mandate.

MINUSMA is a crucial, indispensable element in the achievement of stability, which is a goal that is clearly within the mandate stipulated in the relevant Security Council resolutions and within the parameters of peacekeeping mandates in general. Any attempt to go beyond this mandate would involve conceptual and operational complexities that would not be in the interest of MINUSMA's forces, nor would it serve the purpose of their deployment.

The States of the Group of Five for the Sahel have taken steps to deploy regional forces to tackle the situation in the Sahel. Those steps must enjoy clear and direct support from the Council and the international community. Regional forces, if they have the necessary technical training capacity, would be in the best position to deal with the challenges in the region. Building the capacity of regional forces would be the best guarantee of sustainable peace and security in the region.

With respect to the political track, an objective and impartial assessment of the achievements made thus far is needed in order to chart a path for future work that would deal with the shortcomings and maximize the progress achieved. We can look into adopting an assessment tool that would not interfere with existing mechanisms that are successfully working. We appreciate the work of these mechanisms; they should not be undermined.

In conclusion, Egypt reaffirms that it will cooperate with Council members and at the bilateral level with Mr. Diop to provide him with all the support to that his country and fraternal people need so that we can bring stability and security to the entire territory of Mali.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): It is good to see His Excellency the Foreign Minister Diop of Mali joining us in New York once more. We look forward to hearing from him, given how much is at stake in his country.

The death of a French soldier yesterday is another stark reminder of how dangerous this environment is, and I pay tribute to him for his sacrifice.

I also want to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his very clear briefing. And I would like to welcome him. We really look forward to working closely with him as he takes up his critical job.

We are encouraged by recent moves in Mali to implement the terms of the Peace Agreement. As the French Permanent Representative and others have just said, the establishment of interim authorities in three of the five northern regions is a positive step, as is the launching of some mixed patrols that include northern groups and the Malian armed forces. It is also welcome that the National Reconciliation Conference has taken place, which reflected the healthy cross-section of civil society in Mali, including women's organizations, youth groups, non-governmental organizations, business leaders and former combatants. The United Kingdom has consistently pushed for better inclusion of women in the peace process, which, as the representative of Sweden already pointed out, is a critical driver for success. It is therefore good that debate was inclusive, positive and focused on the future of the country.

Nevertheless, I think I should be as frank in public as we are in private consultations. We remain seriously concerned about the apparent lack of political will among the signatories to really implement the Algiers peace accord. Progress is too slow. It is unpredictable and it is slender. Now is the opportunity to change that.

It is in that context that the human rights situation in Mali needs close attention. The Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/271) details consistent human rights violations, including summary executions and enforced disappearances by members of the Malian defence and security forces and the Platform and the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad. There cannot be an excuse for such actions, and perpetrators of those abuses must be held accountable. Addressing impunity is an essential component of reconciliation and of peace. In that regard, I also think that, more broadly, the link between human rights and peace and security could not be more clear or stark, as we will be debating in this Chamber next week.

With regard to security, that continues to be a significant concern. Despite some improvements, there is a real danger of reversing previous gains. The challenges facing the country are numerous and clear. The secretary General's latest report details the porous nature of Mali's borders and indicates that both violent extremist groups and organized criminal gangs continue to exploit the ungoverned space of the country.

To add to the historic presence of Al-Qaida-aligned organizations in Mali, there is now a new threat from Islamic State-affiliated groups along the border between Mali and the Niger, which is fuelled by the lack of a State presence. Both the representatives of France and Italy have already set out the strategic context of the threat. Should it continue unchecked, the impact on Mali and the wider region could be grave.

I would like to pay tribute to the ongoing work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Mali, Mr. Annadif. Both the military and the civilian components of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) are operating in challenging circumstances. The threat to United Nations personnel from spoilers intent on disrupting the peace process continues to grow. Nevertheless, the staff of MINUSMA and the French forces of Operation Barkhane continue to do their utmost for the people of Mali and the region in general.

As others have mentioned, that task is made more difficult by the continued shortfall of troop numbers and equipment. It is clear that air cover, reconnaissance capability and armoured personnel carriers in particular are urgently required. We therefore call on potential

contributing countries to follow up on the offers that they made to join the Mission, and we welcome Senegal's substantial offer of helicopters.

As I said at the beginning of my statement, political reform is the key to halting the instability. It is unacceptable that MINUSMA should work hard, at a great cost in terms of human life and financial commitment, to maintain a stable environment in which peace can take root if the parties to the Agreement do not take advantage of that and deliver on their promises. Our central message therefore — to be absolutely clear — is that we urge the Government of Mali and opposition groups to seize the opportunities, build on recent progress and press on with implementing the Peace Agreement. MINUSMA is helping to establish the conditions for peace, the only people who can make that peace are the parties themselves.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Bolivia expresses its appreciation for the presence of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali.

We also join our colleagues in offering our condolences to the Government and the people of France and the family of the the French army soldier who lost his life in the line of duty.

We also express our appreciation for the presentation of the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/271) by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and take this opportunity to wish him success in his work.

Bolivia commends the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the efforts made in stabilizing the Republic of Mali through fulfilling its mandate. We regret that its mandate has been undermined by the incursion of extremist and terrorist elements affiliated with Al-Qaida and what is known as the Islamic State, in particular in the north and centre of the country. We are concerned about the persistent situation of violence caused by those groups, which continues today, thereby undermining the goals of the legitimate Government of Mali, the United Nations, partner countries and regional and international organizations that have reaffirmed their commitment to the peace process and constructive dialogue so as to definitively achieve stabilization in Mali.

We condemn the attacks carried out by irregular and terrorist groups against the Malian defence and security forces as well as MINUSMA through increasingly sophisticated, complex and lethal means that collaterally affect civilians, thereby resulting in deaths and leading to the displacement and movement of people to neighbouring countries. We also strongly condemn the use of anti-personnel mines and similar types of weapons, which continue to jeopardize the entire civilian population and the defence and security forces of the Malian Government.

For its part, Bolivia expresses its concern about violence directed against civilians. According to the latest report of the Secretary-General, irregular groups have committed crimes, including sexual abuse directed against women, girls and boys, and there have been reports of summary executions, forced disappearances, the recruitment of children and attacks against personnel of the United Nations peacekeeping mission.

We demand that the armed groups lay down their weapons and demobilize. We also urge them to put aside whatever sectarian differences they might have that stand in the way of constructive dialogue, and to solidify previous agreements so as to end the conflict. Moreover, we value and stress the importance of the Government of Mali's tireless search for a process leading to reconciliation, pacification and understanding through inclusive dialogue that will lay the foundations for stability. We call on MINUSMA to continue to work with the Government of Mali to achieve those goals and in greater coordination with it in the framework of respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Mali.

Finally, Bolivia is aware of the difficult process that the brotherly country of Mali is going through, which has not led to the stability and peace that it needs. We therefore urge donor countries, regional organizations and the international community, in general, to continue to actively contribute to finding the appropriate means necessary to achieve the disarmament, demobilization and definitive reintegration of armed groups through political initiatives, pacification and support for a final reconciliation process for the Malian people.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Allow me first to express our sincere condolences to our French colleagues on the loss of the soldier who was engaged in peacekeeping operations in Mali.

We welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop in the Chamber. We congratulate Jean-Pierre Lacroix on his new appointment and wish him every success in discharging his duties and offer him our support. We thank him for his update based on his visit to Mali.

I would like to raise several key priorities given that the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is scheduled to end in three months.

Kazakhstan notes the efforts taken by the Malian Government in implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, signed in June 2015. However, since tensions continue to prevail, we encourage continued dialogue so as to reduce tensions among armed groups and the consequent instability that they cause. It is therefore necessary to engage them in the peace process so as to integrate them in State structures.

In particular, the mixed patrols by Malian security forces and insurgents in Gao that have taken place since 23 February could gradually be extended. Similarly, the work of the interim administration in the three cities of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu needs to be reinforced to advance the Peace Agreement. Attempts by armed groups to derail the peace process must be prevented by vigorously implementing the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

Our country stands in full agreement with the opinion of the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations and the European Union, as it was expressed in their joint statement of 7 March, that putting the Peace Agreement within the framework of the Algiers process is the only way to establish lasting peace. The commendable mediation role of Algeria must be fully supported with a focus on furthering the political settlement as the ultimate solution.

Kazakhstan reiterates its support for the efforts of the AU, ECOWAS and the countries of the Sahara and Sahel region to strengthen border security and regional cooperation. A regional strategy is the most effective means of achieving the latter. We therefore encourage the States members of the Group of Five for the Sahel — Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger — to proceed with the establishment of a regional force to combat terrorism and transnational crime.

We join others in strongly condemning the violent attacks perpetrated by terrorist groups against civilians, humanitarian workers, Malian security forces, MINUSMA and French personnel. The emergence of five jihadi entities under the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims has significantly increased the terrorist threat in the country and in the region. As Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh) Al-Qaida and associated individuals groups undertakings and entities, Kazakhstan strongly urges international security forces and the Malian armed forces to upgrade their anti-terrorist capabilities.

Such a destabilizing situation means that the international community must find ways to strengthen the Malian security forces with financial and technical assistance. The recent decision of the European Union to extend its Capacity Building Mission in Mali until 18 January 2018 is hailed as a prudent strategy. The Mission greatly contributes to security sector reform.

The fragile security situation with an increase in inter-ethnic violence has led to the deterioration of human rights, which should be addressed by the Council. Addressing the grievances and frustrations of different communities, and especially the youth at risk that are not benefiting from the peace agreement in their daily lives, including those who could be recruited by violent groups, is a related issue.

We pay tribute to the brave men and women of MINUSMA for their sacrifice, and we thank the troop- and police-contributing countries for their personnel, as well as the countries that have provided much-needed military-technical equipment, such as helicopters and armoured personnel carriers.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing, and Minister for Foreign Affairs Diop for coming here today. Mali's support for the objectives of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is essential. We appreciate his interest in personally sharing his Government's views with us.

Later today, the Security Council will hear a briefing from the Secretary General on United Nations peacekeeping. My message will be that we need to

give peacekeeping missions mandates that they can actually achieve. We need to see host Governments and peacekeepers working together to make life safer for people on the ground. We need to make sure that we have the backs of peacekeepers when they cannot do their jobs. And we need to make sure missions have benchmarks for accountability.

We will have a lot more to say this afternoon about peacekeeping, but the Mission in Mali is a key example of where the United States believes the Security Council needs to take a hard look. This is the world's most dangerous peacekeeping mission. We are putting troops in harm's way, asking them to patrol deserts where Al-Qaida thrives. The United States is deeply grateful to the courageous troop contributors, and we condemn, in the strongest terms, the cowards who continue to threaten them.

But the Mission today faces two critical problems. The first is that in far too many parts of Mali there is no peace for the Blue Helmets to keep. It has been almost two years since the Government and armed groups signed a peace agreement. The United States welcomes the installation of three of the five interim authorities in Mali's northern regions, but we still see delay after delay in actually implementing the peace agreement. The Government is absent from many parts of the country, thus providing few services despite the humanitarian needs of Mali's people. Violence is getting worse, armed groups are not laying down their arms and terrorist groups are deepening their cooperation with each other. We therefore have peacekeepers on the ground to support a peace agreement that is not gaining traction.

The second problem is that the Mission's equipment is simply not up to standard. The force has a mandate to make its presence felt to counter the influence of extremist and armed groups, but chronic equipment shortages force the peacekeepers in Mali to curtail their operations. Consider these examples. Even as the threat from improvised explosive devices grows, the force is operating with just 62 per cent of the armoured personnel carriers it is supposed to have deployed. Without enough carriers, the peacekeepers cannot patrol much beyond their bases in the places where Mali's people are most desperate for the help of the United Nations. In the second half of 2016 just 10 per cent of patrols in the Mission's dangerous western sector were medium- or long-range patrols. That means peacekeepers in Mali are not able to be present in areas where the extremists thrive.

Another problem is the Mission's helicopter shortages. Many of the force's bases are in very remote areas. Without helicopters, peacekeepers in Mali must rely on treacherous roads to reach those bases. The lack of helicopters means medical evacuation response times are far too high when peacekeepers get into trouble. That is a dangerous situation but, if we act urgently, there is hope. We can and we must do better. We need to start with the political process. That is why I appreciate the Foreign Minister's presence here today. The United States knows that Mali's Government can do more to implement the peace agreement.

We call on the Government to immediately focus on extending the authority of the State, and for all three signatory parties to the accord to live up to their commitments to stop the violence. That will make Mali safer and more stable. We can also work harder to address the Mission's shortfalls. The resources are out there. While peacekeepers in Mali are desperate for additional armoured personnel carriers, peacekeepers in southern Lebanon have many times more than Mali, with much less need. Countries have pledged more equipment to Mali's peacekeepers. The United States urges those countries to follow through as quickly as possible. The Mission's troop contributors must also live up to their commitments to give their troops the necessary training and equipment to operate in those tough conditions.

Finally, our conversations in the Security Council about the peacekeeping Mission in Mali cannot be only about equipment. The Mission's mandate has to be reasonable and achievable. That is why, in the coming months, the United States will be taking a careful look at the force's mandated tasks and the distribution of its personnel. I am sure that the Council can agree that peacekeepers in Mali need to be prepared to succeed. We want a mandate that helps the Mission play a more effective role. Peacekeepers in Mali operate in very challenging circumstances, but their mission is essential. They put their lives on the line every day to help Mali's people. By working together, the Council, troop contributors and supporters in the international community can help this peacekeeping operation make real progress towards supporting peace in Mali. We have no time to waste.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of the Republic of Mali.

Mr. Diop (Mali) (*spoke in French*): It is always with renewed pleasure that I address the Security Council for the review of the quarterly report (S/2017/271) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali. With me here today is Mr. Mohammed El Mokhtar, Minister for National Reconciliation and of the Diplomatic Council of the President of the Republic of Mali .

Mali's delegation takes note of the report of the Secretary-General and thanks Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Lacroix for his presentation of the report.

Since the Council's review of the Secretary-General's previous report (S/2016/1137) on the situation in Mali, in January (see S/PV.7864), significant progress has been made in the areas of policy, security, the restoration of State authority throughout the country, the protection of human rights, development and humanitarian action. I am pleased that the report underlines that progress and acknowledges the efforts made by the Government in that regard — under the leadership and firm commitment of Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President and Head of State of the Republic of Mali.

In his New Year's address to the nation, the President announced important measures for 2017, within the framework of the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

Today I am pleased to confirm to the Council that in addition to the many institutional measures under way, the conference for national harmony, which took place from the 27 March to 2 April in Bamako, has concluded successfully. This was an opportunity for the children of Mali to come together, and the conference lived up to its promise: it was fully inclusive, as all Mali stakeholders were able to set out together on the path to peace and national reconciliation, including the Government of Mali, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, the Platform coalition of armed groups, the majority and opposition political parties, and all of the active forces in the country. Discussions were frank, open and in-depth, in a spirit of complete of freedom of speech, in keeping with article 5 of the agreement, and resulted in relevant recommendations that will form the foundation for the elaboration, under the auspices of the President of the Republic, of a charter for peace, unity and national reconciliation.

Another major step in the implementation of the agreement was the compromise reached by the parties at the high-level meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee held on 10 February to establish interim authorities for all regions in the north of Mali. The interim authorities were already effectively put in place on 28 February in Kidal and on 2 March in Gao and Ménaka. Pursuant to the consultations conducted by the high representative of the President of the Republic in charge of the implementation of the agreement, we hope to see the establishment of interim authorities in Timbuktu and Taoudenni on 13 April, God willing.

In the area of defence and security, the Government of Mali has taken the necessary measures to operationalize mixed patrols. The terrorist attack against the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Gao on 18 January, as terrible as it was, in no way weakened the resolve of the Malian parties to ensure a successful outcome to the process. Security-sector reform is also under way, as are the cantonment and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes.

In parallel, the process of reviewing the Constitution is also under way. The goal here is to focus on the relevant provisions of the peace agreement, in particular through the establishment of a second chamber in Parliament. The Government has already forwarded to the National Assembly a draft law on this issue, which, once adopted by the national representation, will then be submitted to the people of Mali via referendum by the end of the year.

Above and beyond these measures, the Government is continuing its development efforts on the ground, when security conditions allow, through such programmes as the emergency programme for development in the north of the country and the programme for economic reconstruction and recovery.

These progress that I have just described was made possible, as I mentioned earlier, thanks to the leadership and the resolute personal commitment of the President of the Republic of Mali and by the gradual rebuilding of trust among the stakeholders in Mali. Nonetheless, these still-fragile accomplishments should not make us lose sight of the many challenges still facing the process. These include issues related to the mobilization

of resources for the effective implementation of the agreement and for the cantonment and DDR processes; the restoration of State authority throughout the territory of Mali, as Council members have just mentioned, which is a strategic objective of very high importance for the Government of my country; and the provision of a peace dividend to the people who live in regions affected by the crisis, basically all of the Malian people, who are suffering from the effects of the crisis.

The security situation in central Mali is also a source of concern for the Malian authorities. In order to rise to the challenge, we have taken the following three measures.

The first measure is the adoption of an integrated security plan for these regions aimed at ensuring the presence and operationalization of public administration at all levels as well as basic social services, and to enable us to combat the proliferation of light weapons as well as coordinate, monitor and assess the strategy for fighting insecurity and terrorism in the central region.

The second measure aims to operationalize traditional mechanisms for conflict prevention and management, and the third is the creation of a team of judges who will work with traditional leaders in the framework of transitional justice. The implementation of these measures will require substantial support from all of the members of the Council and all partners.

Ten months after the adoption of resolution 2295 (2016), I wish to note that that the relevant provisions of the resolution are, unfortunately, still difficult to implement on the ground, in particular because of the gaps that Council members have just underscored related to the operational capacities that the Mission requires in order to properly discharge its mandate.

Here I would like to underscore the need for the Council to provide the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) with the means necessary for it to fully carry out its stabilization mandate in Mali and also to help the Government in its efforts to gradually establish State authority throughout the country's territory.

In this regard, we welcome the announcement made by Ambassador Seck of Senegal of the deployment of the rapid-reaction force within MINUSMA, made up of a Senegalese contingent. I also wish to underscore, as several Council members, including China, Egypt, Kazakhstan and Senegal, have done, the need to strengthen the capacity of the Malian security and defence forces. Indeed, regardless of the nature of the mandate, it is the Government of Mali and the Malian defence and security forces, which face no limitations in terms of mandate or timeline, that must accomplish the work on the ground. Today our forces are the ones on the front lines of the fight against terrorism and the ones suffering the highest casualties, so it is extremely important to view this issue in parallel with that of the strengthening of the Mission itself.

I wish also here to reiterate our appeal to all partners to honour the commitments they have undertaken in order to promote the peace process in Mali.

One of the major challenges facing the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali remains the upsurge of attacks by terrorist groups, violent extremists and drug traffickers against the civilian population; against the Malian defence and security forces, as I just mentioned; against the international forces; and, most recently, against the signatory movements, which are increasingly becoming targets for terrorists.

We are confronting the terrorist challenge along with the countries of the Sahel region and the rest of the world, as this challenge and threat is global in nature. The Security Council is well informed, as was mentioned by an eminent member of the Council, about the situation in Libya and the threat that this presents for the Sahel region. The Council last month visited the Lake Chad basin region and witnessed the gravity of the situation in Cameroon, Nigeria, the Niger and in Chad owing to the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist organization.

To deal with this worrisome security challenge, the Heads of State of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) decided, during their second ordinary summit held in Bamako on 6 February, to create a joint force to fight terrorism, transnational organized crime and illegal immigration throughout the G-5 Sahel territory. In its capacity as current Chair of the G-5 Sahel, Mali is coordinating this process in order to establish this force as quickly as possible. Its strategic concept of operations will be considered during the week of 13 April by the African Union Peace and Security Council, which will then submit it to the Security Council for approval.

Once the Security Council receives the concept of operations, I strongly hope it will quickly address this issue and authorize without delay the deployment of

this joint G-5 Sahel force, with the financial support of the United Nations and partners of Mali, which is necessary for its functioning. I welcome the Secretary-General's support for the establishment of the force, which will work in close coordination, in perfect harmony and in full complementarity with MINUSMA, the Barkhane force and all the countries, institutions and partners involved in the region. I would also like to say that the goal of the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel is not to become involved in an endless war. We believe that, by engaging in this fight against terrorism, we are creating an environment that will be more conducive to the success of MINUSMA in carrying out its work. By doing this, we are fully aware that we are becoming part and parcel of the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The force, therefore, can only create the conditions for better implementation of all the commitments undertaken by the all the parties.

With regard to the human rights situation referred to in paragraphs 33 to 40 of the report of the Secretary-General, the Government of Mali took note of the statistics provided. It should be recalled that the majority of cases of alleged violations that have been documented and attributed to the Government have been carried out in areas in which judicial and investigative units are absent owing to the lack of security. In any event, I reiterate the determination of the Malian authorities to take all necessary measures to prevent and, if necessary, punish proven cases of human rights violations. In that regard, I should say that, at this stage, we are dealing only with leads and only an investigation on the ground can allow us to establish the facts and gradually bring the perpetrators to justice.

I would not want to conclude without conveying the warm congratulations of the Government of Mali to the delegation of the United States of America on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. We wish you, Madam President, every success as you preside over the Council. My congratulations also go to the United Kingdom for its outstanding steering of the work of the Security Council during the past month, one of the highlights of which was the adoption of resolution 2347 (2017), on the protection of cultural heritage. Mali, which has been a victim of the destruction of part of its cultural heritage during the occupation of its northern regions, of course became co-author of that resolution, which was initiated by France and Italy, to whom I pay tribute.

I would also like to commend the work carried out by Mr. Hervé Ladsous, former Under-Secretary-General, during the six long years in which he led the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. At the same time, I would like to congratulate Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix on the trust placed in him by the Secretary-General when he was put at the head of Department of Peacekeeping Operations. I would like to assure him of the full cooperation of the delegation of Mali in the carrying out his mission. I am pleased to express, once again, the gratitude of the people and Government of Mali to the United Nations; the countries and institutions that are members of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, presided by Algeria; the troop-contributing countries; and the international community for the sacrifices they have made in order to reach a definitive settlement of the Malian crisis.

I would also like to pay tribute to all the victims of this crisis — civilian and military, foreigners and Malians — who died with honour on the battlefield. Allow me to recall Julien Barbé, a French solider who lost his life yesterday while carrying out a mission in Mali. I would like to express to the Council, to President of France François Hollande and the people of France the deepest condolences of the President of the Republic of Mali and all the people of Mali. This is a tragedy and it once again reminds us of the sacrifices made by France and many other countries to bring about stability in our country. We hope that this soldier will not have died in vain.

Finally, I welcome the efforts of the French Barkhane forces and the excellent work of the men and women of MINUSMA, with Special Representative Annadif Mahamat Saleh at its head, with whom the Government of Mali has an excellent cooperative working relationship.

Before concluding, I would like to say that I have listened to Council members and I understand the expectations that have been expressed at this table by members. I also understand the impatience that every member feels and which is reflected by that of the people of Mali on the ground, who also want us to move much more quickly in ensuring the security of our country, protecting it and ensuring its stability. I have heard that message loudly and clearly and I will convey it to the highest authorities in Mali.

I am convinced that we will do everything we can to continue enjoying the trust that has been placed in

my country and my people by the Council. We hope that, with God's help, in the upcoming months and weeks, we will be able to bring a new dynamism to the peace process in Mali in order to ensure that peace and stability spread throughout the region.

The President: I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Diop for his statement. His presence is very appreciated, as we all needed to hear his thoughts. We also want again to congratulate Mr. Lacroix. We all look forward to working with him as well.

The meeting rose at noon.